



Online Transition DPT and Clinical Specialization Certification Programs for Nigerian Physiotherapists

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The Nigeria Physiotherapy Network is pleased to announce to all our colleagues in Nigeria and in the diaspora concerning an online transitional DPT and Clinical Physical Therapy Specialization program we have brokered between some US Physical Therapy programs and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU), Nnewi, Nigeria.

Plans are at an advanced stage of negotiating access to online transitional DPT and clinical specialization certification programs for Nigerian physiotherapists. This collaboration being brokered by the Nigeria Physiotherapy Network is between some United States Physical Therapy Schools and (for now) a partnering Physiotherapy Training School in Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi. Hopefully, more Physiotherapy Schools in Nigeria will sign onto this partnership in the near future.

For some years now, Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT), Transitional DPT (tDPT) and Clinical Residency programs (CRP) have been identified as the next logical paradigm to pursue in Nigeria physiotherapy education and training. To this end, various bodies and other stakeholders including Nigerian Physiotherapists, the Nigeria Society of Physiotherapy (NSP) and the Medical Rehabilitation Therapists (Registration) Board of Nigeria (MRTRB) have debated this clinical education issue. Different strategies for achieving this next advance in PT education in Nigeria were proffered. From what we gathered, the possibility of Nigerian training programs transitioning from Bachelor degree (BSc, BPhysio or BMR) to Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT) degree programs is a few years away because of the procedures and processes such a proposal goes through to get statutory approval from the National Universities Commission (NUC). Similarly, the strategies to implement a CRP in Nigeria are still being hotly debated. Major concerns include the credential of PTs who will administer such CRP clinical specialists program, mode of implementation and funding, etc. Meanwhile, PTs at home in Nigeria continue to very strongly clamor for an immediate pathway NOW to achieving post-baccalaureate clinical education, either through a tDPT and/or a CRP. Some have indeed made efforts to enroll in online tDPT programs in the United States, but were not permitted for lack of US PT license.

Some Specific information on the Online tDPT/CRP for Nigerian PTs

At this time, two (2) major Universities here in the US have agreed to work with us. Specifically, University of Michigan-Flint (UMFLint) has made an exception for us, and will be offering Nigerian PTs, online tDPT program and an online CRP with specialization in orthopaedics, geriatrics, neurology, pediatrics and cardiopulmonary PT. They agreed to waive the US PT license pre-requisite and some other requirements. Similarly, the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC), Kansas City, KS will collaborate with us in training lecturers up to PhD level to achieve excellence in research and teaching. Discussions are still underway with a third and a fourth University to join the US-Nigeria PT Collaborative Alliance. Below are the highlights:

- Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi has agreed to be the Nigerian Partnering PT Institution to pilot this initiative. The University will provide the entire infrastructure needed to transmit a tDPT and CRP curriculum long-distance over broadband internet access. Details will be worked out and finalized before the 1st cohort of tDPT and CRP students begin classes in August 2011.
- The content of the tDPT and CRP programs will be delivered 100% online to Nigeria.
- There is a possibility to make arrangements for Nigerian PTs with clinical specialization or certification in the diaspora to visit Nigeria at intervals for hands-on clinical block lectures.
- The first cohort of 20 students will be allowed to enroll in the tDPT and/or CRP program with an expected start date of August 2011.
- 12-24 months of study may be required to complete either of the two programs depending on the diligence of each student and current degree status, BSc or MSc. It may be possible for credits or waivers to be given for some courses if a PT already has a MSc degree in physiotherapy.
- It is possible to combine a tDPT with a CRP clinical core; i.e. tDPT with specialization. This may extend the length of program for another 8-12 months.
- We are still negotiating waivers for TSE, TOEFL, GRE, and other standardized tests generally required for graduate

school admission in the US.

- We were able to negotiate a student exchange program. Nigerian PT students who have funding or who are able to sponsor themselves will have the opportunity to participate in a 3-4 weeks elective education experience at UMFlint, Michigan, USA in July/August 2011. If successful, it could become an annual opportunity for Nigerian PT students.
- We were able to negotiate Faculty (lecturer) exchange programs. Specifically, the UMFlint will support sponsorship of two (2) lecturers from Nigerian PT schools to come each on a 9-months program to under-study the program curriculum, technology, and organization of DPT and CRP programs so that they can adapt and implement in Nigerian PT Schools on their return to Nigeria. The two lecturers are expected to be sponsored by the US State Department under the Fulbright Scholar Fellowship program. NAU will be given the opportunity to nominate one of their lecturers for one Fulbright position, and the second position will go to a lecturer to be chosen from any of the other PT schools. We will make a determination on this position at the appropriate time.
- We are also working on making it possible for Nigerian PTs who are PhD students in Nigerian PT programs to be able to come to the US on Research internships for their doctoral dissertation research as Visiting Research Scholars (VRS). We are currently actively pilot testing the possibility of bringing two (2) currently enrolled PhD students (PTs) from Nigeria for research internships as VRSs.
- Many more goodies for Nigerian PTs, Lecturers and Professors and students are still in the works. As God grant us successes in our negotiations, we will make such information available.

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